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ABSTRACT

A study examined the Ronald Reagan Administration's rhetoric about the invasion of Grenada to determine its ethical quality and whether the American public could make a fair judgment about the incident based on this rhetoric. Examination of President Reagan's rhetorical efforts revealed numerous violations of democratic ethical standards. Arguments and evidence that were distorted and withheld inhibited the American public's ability to appraise the incident fairly. Four criteria for democratic ethical standards were clearly violated. The first criterion requires that all relevant evidence be disclosed, and the record shows that significant facts were withheld from the American public. The second criterion of democratic standards of ethics requires that all arguments be clearly presented and understood. The Administration, however, disseminated inaccurate information and many unproven assertions. Democratic ethics also require the individual be allowed to make a rational, well informed choice. Clearly, since the American public was deliberately deceived, its ability to make a significant choice was impeded. Finally, the democratic standards require that appropriate emotion be used. Here, again, the Reagan Administration failed by consistently appealing to fear for the safety of the Americans and the threat of communism as justifications for the invasion, when neither was justified. (Twenty-nine references are attached.) (KEH)

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An Ethical Analysis of Reagan's Rhetoric Justifying The Invasion of Grenada

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ABSTRACT

The ethical quality of political rhetoric is best determined by applying ethical standards arising from the political system in which it is offered. Thus, Reagan's rhetorical efforts to justify the invasion and occupation of Grenada must be evaluated by democratic standards of ethics. Democratic standards of ethics stem from democracy's need for free and open debate.

Reagan's rhetoric regarding the Grenada invasion contained numerous violations of democratic ethical standards. Reagan apparently ignored, suppressed, distorted, created, and (in a sense) destroyed relevant evidence. In addition, Reagan withheld, ignored, and/or misrepresented crucial arguments raised to support and oppose the invasion.

An Ethical Analysis of Reagan's Rhetoric
Justifying the Invasion of Grenada

The ethical appraisal of communicative activities proceeds from the recognition that communication is the tool by which we both form, and are formed by, others. Although this recognition implies that any communication possesses ethical qualities, ethical appraisal is not necessarily relevant to all communicative acts. Such appraisal becomes relevant when ethical norms or principles are, or may have been, violated.

On Tuesday, October 25, 1983, the U.S. military invaded the island of Grenada. A debate concerning the justification for the attack ensued. The Reagan Administration came forth with numerous public statements in defense of the invasion. The Administration, in attempting to justify the incident and thereby win the support of the American people, claimed three main reasons for the attack. First, it was claimed that the primary motivation was to protect the Americans on Grenada who faced imminent danger. Second, the American public was told that there was a strong communist threat in Grenada and that the attack was an attempt to preserve democracy on the island. Finally, the claim was made that the United States responded to a request from the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to help it maintain regional security. The American public was asked--both directly and indirectly--to support the attack based on these three reasons.

Some questions arise: Could the American public make a fair decision based on the evidence offered? Were ethical standards upheld in the Administration's communication with the public? The purpose of this paper is to determine the ethical quality of the Administration's rhetoric and thereby determine whether Americans could indeed make a fair judgment about the incident.

The Administration's rhetoric was the primary—if not sole—source of information for the public to use in making a judgment about the incident. In order to appraise the ethicality of that rhetorical communication, the criteria by which it will be examined first must be defined. Because the incident in question was a political act, we will use the ethical criteria by which our political system runs. Communication, then, will be considered ethical or unethical in light of those criteria (Brandt, 2).

A democratic perspective for ethics in communication is based upon the values inherent within democratic government. Nilsen defines four fundamental values in a democracy ("Free Speech"). First, there is a sense of intrinsic worth of the human personality. Second, there is a belief in reason as the instrument of individual and social development. Third, self-determination is regarded as the means to individual fulfillment. And fourth, human fulfillment of potentialities is seen as a positive good. Thus, ethical communication in a democracy will foster and respect these values.

A democratic orientation also has concern for both the means and ends of communication. Ends are considered ethical to the degree they uphold the values of the system. But, Nilsen notes, there is also a high regard for means.

> When being persuaded a man is not only influenced directly or indirectly in his choice of a course of action, he is influenced by his method of making the choice. . . . In a democratic society--I do not think this can be denied--the method of decision is vital. Whether we vote for a particular candidate in a particular election may not be momentous for democracy, but how we make up our minds about candidates is indeed momentous ("Free Speech" 242-43).

How are democratic values upheld to maintain ethical quality? Day claims that democratic debate, or, "the confrontation of opposing ideas and beliefs for the purpose of decision" serves as the technology of decision making in a

democracy (5). From this, specific guidelines can be established that uphold and preserve the values of democracy.

First, in order for debate to provide sound decisions, there is a need for all evidence to be disclosed to listeners, whether or not all of the evidence supports one's viewpoint. If evidence is concealed or withheld, individuals' ability to make a sound judgment is inhibited because their judgments would be based upon faulty or insufficient evidence. Second, arguments must be presented clearly and understood by the audience. Manipulation of arguments or use of faulty reasoning does not produce a sound judgment.

There is a third consideration for ethical guidelines in a democracy. Nilsen states that, when seeking to communicate to others in order to influence opinions or actions, the "ethical touchstone is the degree of informed, rational, and critical choice—significant choice—that is fostered by our speaking" (Ethics 38). Significant choice is dependent upon the speaker's concern with truth, which includes "good intentions, the ability to appraise evidence objectively, knowledge of facts, knowledge of values, and most importantly, the exercise of goodwill" (Nilsen, Ethics 16-34).

And finally, because communication often possesses some degree of emotion, the issue becomes "not to dissociate emotion from reason, but to stimulate appropriate emotion" (Nilsen, Ethics, 49). In stimulating appropriate emotion, one must always be conscious of the truth, good reasons, intentions, and values (Nilsen, Ethics Chapter 2).

PROTECTION OF AMERICANS ON GRENADA

The primary justification offered for the invasion was Reagan's concern that the Americans on Grenada would be "harmed or held as hostages" by the new government of Grenada. This threat justified action because "our government has a responsibility to go to the aid of its citizens if their right to life and

liberty is threatened" ("Transcript"). Our contention is that President Reagan lied when he suggested the invasion was undertaken primarily to rescue imperiled American citizens (primarily medical students) on Grenada. Our case for this contention rests on the logical inconsistency of his position, the lack of evidence for claims of danger to American citizens, the existence of a motive to lie, and evidence that he may have tried to manufacture evidence.

Protection Was Only a Cover Story

If Reagan knew that there was little or no danger to the Americans on Grenada, and if his decision to invade was not made with this as his primary consideration, we would conclude that his use of the threat to the Americans was merely a "cover story" designed to give the invasion a veneer of legitimacy. The ethical questions aroused by Reagan's use of such cover stories were raised by Kristol.

> One of the most distressing aspects of American foreign policy today is the felt need of our government to lie to the American people when it takes an action, or adopts a policy, that it believes to be necessary for the integrity of our national interests. The invasion of Grenada was a most illuminating case in point.
>
> Why did we invade Grenada? According to the White House and State Department, the main reason was the danger to American medical students in Grenada because of the political turbulence there. This was not, of course, the real reason.

Since, as Kristol noted, "we simply could have airlifted those students out instead of sending the Marines in," the use of the Marines is evidence that a rescue was not the real motive for invading.

One might also expect rescuers to head straight for the potential victims, whose location was known. But, Treaster reports, the endangered Americans later

said that "more than 30 hours passed before the United States' troops reached many of the students." In fact, the invasion and delay provided both the motive and the opportunity to harm the Americans. The vice-chancellor of the medical school attended by most of the Americans noted that, "If in fact they had wanted to take revenge on the United States for launching the invasion, they could have come on campus and shot students" (Treaster).

Pastor, a member of President Carter's National Security Council argued:

> Common sense would suggest that the Grenadian government knew that the U.S. was eager to find a pretext for an invasion, and taking hostages would have provided the best one. The government would be more likely to take hostages if there were an imminent or probable invasion than if the U.S. government was in direct contact trying to gain assurances of safety for U.S. citizens. So, in that sense, an invasion would have endangered the lives of U.S. citizens rather than protected them (U.S. House, Military Actions 82).

While one can argue whether the invasion actually increased the danger to the Americans, no arguments were advanced by the Administration to explain why an invasion and occupation were necessary rather than a simple evacuation. As the New York Times put it, the Americans' "evacuation, in any case, does not require an occupation" ("Which Threat").

Even if the invasion did not create greater danger, there was reason to doubt there ever was any danger to the Americans. The government of Grenada had every motive to protect the school and students, which provided millions of dollars per year to the small, financially troubled island, and "everyone in Grenada regarded the medical school as a major asset" (U.S. House, Military Actions 3). "Indeed," Pastor wrote, "the Grenadian government went out of its way to assure both the U.S. citizens and the U.S. government." Grenada's ruler, General Austin, called the chancellor and offered to open a supermarket and to

provide the students transportation, despite a twenty-four hour curfew in effect. Austin also "sent one of his officers to check that everything was O.K. and gave [vice-chancellor] Bourne his home phone number if there were any problems" (U.S. House, Military Actions 82).

In Reagan's rhetoric, fears of a Cuban-Soviet subversion of the Caribbean region "were conveyed to the American people only in an undertone, with the emphasis going to those presumably endangered students" (Kristol). We agree with Kristol that "the real reasons" for the invasion were "the fear of other Caribbean governments before a new and potentially troublesome Soviet puppet-state in their area, and our own fear of still another Soviet military base in our 'backyard.'" If Kristol's version of the story is true, the incongruity between the two is ethically troublesome. Day describes the need for all arguments to be clearly expounded when decisions are being made, and says a "decision is meaningful only if there are alternatives from which to choose; it is intelligent only if the alternatives are understood" (6). Because the alternatives were not equally shared with the American public and therefore not clearly understood, a meaningful judgment about the invasion could not possibly have been made. Had each argument been examined equally, only then could a fair judgment have been made.

If these were the real reasons for the invasion, then the "rescue mission" was a cover story. Reagan's motive for using this cover story was that the U.S. needed to portray the invasion as consistent with international law. International law does not allow a nation to invade or intervene in the internal affairs of another nation because it disagrees with the nation's foreign policy. Thus, the Reagan people "found themselves in a position where they could not explain their action without seeming to violate principles the U.S. government had been expounding for decades. . . . the principles of international law" (Kristol 26).

Reagan wanted a legal pretext to justify an illegal action, and he wanted an explanation that would prevent the U.S. from appearing hypocritical. The transparent cover story apparently was no more effective than the truth. Kristol reported a wit's suggestion that "the U.S. scatter a few thousand medical students" in nations it might want to invade some day. Kristol found the wit's "contempt for our official hypocrisy" to be "perfectly justifiable" (26).

Evidence can be found to suggest that the Administration was deliberately deceitful. Pastor reported that the medical school's chancellor "received a phone call from U.S. Ambassador to Barbados Milan Bish as well as from others in the State Department designed to elicit a statement from him that the students were in danger." These calls may have been "aimed at obtaining a pretext for invasion." The chancellor refused to make such a statement because "he knew this was not the case" (U.S. House, Military Actions 81).

We find here a basic violation of ethical standards. The Administration attempted to justify the end, i.e. the invasion, by manipulating the means, i.e. the arguments it offered the public. A democracy focuses upon both means and ends in any given situation. Day described this characteristic, writing, "a democratic society accepts certain ends, i.e. decisions, because they have been arrived at by democratic means" (4). Thus, even if the invasion was a good thing, defending it by using false arguments was wholly unethical.

There were troubling inconsistencies in Reagan's statements about the threat to the Americans. Reagan spokesman Speakes "had said the day before the invasion . . . that there was no indication of danger to Americans. After the invasion, he said that they had been in danger." Defense Secretary Weinberger said, three days after the invasion, that "there were 'indications' from 'intelligence reports' of plans to take American hostages. But intelligence sources later said there was no clear evidence of such a threat" (Taylor, "In Wake" 20).

Up to this point, we have argued that Reagan's focus on the dangers of a hostage situation was over-emphasized and a gross violation of ethical standards. However, if it is true that he completely lied about the threat to Americans, then ethical norms were more clearly violated. The American public was reminded of the horrors of the hostage crisis in Iran, and told that everything had been done to prevent a similar crisis. If there was no such threat, our emotions and rational thought processes were manipulated, decreasing our ability to make a rational decision.

Unethical Evidence Used to Support Cover Story

In light of the foregoing, a strong presumption against there being any danger to the students would have existed. Given this situation, one might have expected Reagan to be anxious to supply rhetorically sound evidence. Instead, we have found that Reagan failed to collect or produce rhetorically and ethically sound evidence, suppressed or ignored relevant evidence, and failed to use or rebut good evidence not consistent with his cover story.

After examining the evidence surrounding the invasion as well as the Administration's attempts to justify the invasion, Pastor concluded that "the Reagan Administration did not want to receive any information about the students from their parents, or from the Grenadian government unless that information reinforced their own fear they were in danger." This is hardly the diligent examination of evidence we would condone. Or, as Pastor put it "More importantly, the Reagan Administration did not seek out such information" (U.S. House, Military Actions 83).

Democratic ethical standards demand that all evidence be examined in an argument, whether or not it supports one's point of view. Day claims that when making a decision there is "an overriding ethical responsibility to promote full confrontation of opposing opinions" (6). Thus, all evidence and arguments

need to be considered. If evidence or arguments are concealed or not sought out, inadequate decisions will be made.

The Administration also claimed to have evidence that it either never had or refused to produce. To bolster its claim that the threat to the students was genuine, the Reagan Administration "suggested at one point that it had obtained secret documents purporting to show that the Grenadian government considered taking U.S. citizens as hostages." However, despite the fact that this was the evidence for "one of the most effective points made by Secretary [of State] Shultz in his first press conference," skeptics are still asking, "Where is that evidence, and how reliable do U.S. political analysts judge it?" (U.S. House, Military Actions 82).

The Administration "repeatedly said that its assertions were supported by . . . 'a treasure trove of documents' captured by the invaders." In fact, there was "no evidence that a terrorist training base existed or that Cubans had planned to take over Grenada either in the documents released Friday or in any other materials made public by the administration" (Taylor, "In Wake"). Lewis demanded to know, "Where is the evidence for these terrifying assertions?" Reagan officials even acknowledged that their credibility had been damaged by failing to provide "detailed evidence" to support their "sweeping charges about Soviet and Cuban influence" in Grenada (Taubman, "The Reason").

The value of evidence is, of course, that others can evaluate its reliability. Until it is produced for examination, it cannot properly be called evidence at all. After questioning the absence of the the missing evidence, Pastor built a case to show that a threat to the students did not exist and could not, therefore, be used to justify the invasion (U.S. House, Military Actions 82). The issues are related. The strong case for the absence of a threat necessitated reciprocally good evidence and reasoning from Reagan, but he provided assertions unsupported by evidence.

Reagan did make some effort to demonstrate the existence of a threat to the students. For example, Reagan noted the expressed fear and gratitude of the "rescued" students. As Representative Dymally testified, the "anxiety level of the students was only raised after two American consular officers visited the island and, of course, after the invasion" (U.S. House, Military Actions 3). The absence of fear before the officers' visit is further evidenced by Shelton's testimony that "even as late as the Monday before the attack, the students could have left, and few did" (U.S. House, Military Actions 58).

Further evidence that there was no threat to the students came in the form of a telex sent to a meeting of the students' parents. The telex informed the parents that the students had held a meeting at which "only 10% of the students expressed a desire to leave." When this telex reached the parents' meeting, the parents "sent a cable to President Reagan informing him that their children were safe and asking him 'not to move too quickly or to take any precipitous actions at this time'" (U.S. House, Military Actions 80). Reagan neither presented, rebutted, nor explained this evidence.

The students and their parents were not the only involved parties to see no threat justifying a rescue. Ambassador Shelton compared the competing evidence in this way:

> President Reagan's justification for the . . . invasion of Grenada was based on the threat to Americans on the island and the threat to the Caribbean by the Cuban-Soviet buildup.
>
> In regard to the former justification, there is no supporting evidence as yet. Quite the contrary, the vice-chancellor of St. George's Medical School, . . . who was on the ground and in close contact with the Government of Grenada, believed that what would jeopardize American lives would, in fact, be a U.S. invasion (U.S. House, Military Actions 58).

Pastor quoted two school officials. "Dr. Geoffrey Bourne and Gary Solin both agreed at the time and in retrospect that the safety of the medical students, in Solin's words, 'was never in danger.' In Bourne's words: 'From the point of view of saving our students, the invasion was unnecessary'" (U.S. House, Military Actions 83). Chancellor Modica called the invasion "very unnecessary" (McQuiston).

Besides failing to offer the best available support for his decision to invade, Reagan also failed to explain why a military invasion, rather than a simple evacuation, was necessary. An explanation seemed in order because there seemed to have been "no effort by the Administration to . . . arrange an evacuation of U.S. citizens" (U.S. House, Military Actions 82). As Modica noted, "those students could have been lifted out of there today and tomorrow with arrangements we had made" (McQuiston).

The need for an explanation was increased when the New York Times reported that the captain of the Cunard liner Countess had offered to evacuate the Americans when he made his scheduled stop in Grenada on Tuesday--the morning of the invasion (Smith 21). No satisfactory explanation was ever offered, although the White House did say that they "came to distrust the offer" agreed to by the Grenadian government (Smith 1). In an effort to show that an air evacuation was not possible, Speakes "stressed that the airport on Grenada had been closed on Oct. 24, thwarting any possibility that the Americans . . . could have been evacuated peacefully." When confronted with witnesses who saw at least four planes take off that day, Speakes admitted that his assertion "proved to be false" (Taylor, "In Wake").

Thus, we have shown that Reagan ignored critical evidence and used faulty evidence to support the invasion. Lack of evidence not only potentially misguided the public in judging the situation, it may have misguided the Administration's choice of its course of action. Faulty evidence diminishes the

ability to decide rationally for users and their audiences. We have seen that democracy adheres to such standards as truth, freedom of dissent, and justice (Wallace). Yet these very values were violated and even ignored by the leaders of the democratic system in which we live.

SAVING GRENADA FOR DEMOCRACY

Reagan also justified the invasion by arguing that it was necessary to save the people of Grenada from the "self-proclaimed band of military men" who had overthrown the Bishop government and left Grenada "without a government" ("Transcript"). Reagan said that one purpose of the invasion was to "help in the restoration of democratic institutions in Grenada" (Taylor, "Legality").

Skeptics are first tempted to ask how democracy can be forcibly installed or restored under any circumstances. Senator Moynihan, in fact, called the invasion an "act of war" and asserted that the U.S. lacks the right to "bring in democracy at the point of a bayonet" (Taylor, "Legality"). Democracy seems to be a commodity that cannot be forced upon others.

Since the Revolutionary Military Council (RMC) had seized power in Grenada on October 12 and the decision to overthrow the RMC was made by October 23, the skeptic is again tempted to ask how the U.S. can determine the democratic nature of a government that has been in power less than twelve days. Reagan's only effort in this regard was to assert that the Soviets and Cubans "assisted and encouraged the violence" that led to the killing of Bishop. The Administration, however, "made public no evidence that supports its suggestions of a Soviet or Cuban role in the killings" (Taylor, "In Wake").

Pastor suspected even more was afoot than poor arguments and missing evidence. He believed that the precipitous attack may have been motivated by Reagan's desire to make sure the new government would never get the chance to prove its legitimacy and authority. Pastor asked, "Is it possible that the

'marines got there just in time' before the new Grenadian government could prove to the international community that it was a government, and that it could assure the safety of U.S. citizens?" (U.S. House, Military Actions 84). If this were the case, Reagan was, in a sense, destroying evidence.

RESTORING SECURITY IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN

Reagan's third justification for the invasion was that the coup in Grenada posed a direct threat to the security of the Eastern Caribbean and an indirect threat to the security of the United States. As evidence of these threats, Reagan reported that the invasion was requested by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States because those nations feared for their security. The treaty under which the OECS was formed was then used to color the invasion as legal.

The veneer of legality lent by invoking the OECS treaty was thin indeed. The translucency of this legitimizing position results from apparent failures to abide by the treaty itself, the absence of a regional threat, opposition by other states in the region, clear violations of other agreements the U.S. has signed, and evidence that the U.S. rather than the OECS actually initiated the request.

OECS Treaty Misrepresented to "Legalize" Invasion

The OECS treaty allows for making "arrangements for collective security against external aggression" providing that its members' decision to do so is unanimous (Taylor, "Legality"). Reagan asserted that "six members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States joined by Jamaica and Barbados" had asked for help ("Transcript"). In fact, "the decision was not unanimous," as the treaty requires, because two of the seven members abstained and Grenada was not invited to vote (U.S. House, Military Actions 3; Taylor, "Legality"). Not satisfied with lying to the public himself, Reagan had Deputy Secretary of State Dam repeat the lie in testimony before the House Committee on Foreign

Affairs. Only minutes after Dymally pointed out the actual OECS vote, Dam spoke of "the concerns of the OECS as unanimously expressed to us" as a reason for the invasion (U.S. House, Military Actions 22).

Gouran has outlined various guidelines for assessing the ethical quality of governmental communication. He claims that "deliberate falsification of information released to the public, especially under circumstances involving the general welfare, is inappropriate and irresponsible" (20-31). Dam's testimony that the decision was unanimous when, in fact, it was not, indicated further carelessness and inappropriateness on the Administration's part. Once again, decisions were impeded because false evidence was offered. As Gouran points out, the implications of lying are even more serious because the decision involved the welfare of Americans in Grenada.

Some other violations of the OECS treaty needed explanations that were not provided. For example, the treaty's arrangements for collective security are expressly to be invoked "against external aggression." However, "Mr. Shultz did not cite any threat of external aggression in Grenada." Additionally, three important participants in the invasion--the U.S., Jamaica, and Barbados--are not members of OECS at all (Taylor, "Legality").

The need for this legal justification was that the invasion clearly violated the Charters of both the United Nations and the Organization of American States--both of which the United States has signed. The Secretary of State's "suggestion that the [OAS] charter's provisions were inapplicable" prompted legal experts to say they were "baffled" (Taylor, "Legality"). Two key questions were not addressed. How would compliance with the OECS treaty nullify OAS and UN provisions forbidding invasions, occupations, and similar attempts to meddle in the internal affairs of other nations? How could Reagan claim he had complied when the unanimous vote and external aggression requirements of the treaty were not met and three non-members took part?

There Was No Threat To The Region

Other questions were to arise. For example, was there really a threat to the region to justify Secretary Dam's assertion that the Administration "took seriously the concerns of the OECS" (U.S. House, Military Actions 22)? The President had good reason to doubt that Grenada posed a threat to its neighbors, particularly after the Prime Minister of Barbados said, "in the presence of the President of the United States . . . that the Soviets and Cuba did not pose a threat to the islands from Grenada" (U.S. House, United States Policy 44).

Further support for our argument that there was no threat necessitating U.S. help is found in the neighboring countries' thoughts before and after the invasion. Prior to the invasion, "four important members of CARICOM, the other major regional grouping . . . opposed the invasion." And, these nations "subsequently condemned" the invasion (U.S. House, Military Actions 3).

Without attempting to refute Reagan's characterization of the Soviet Union as the "evil empire," we must assert that Reagan made no effort to present the best arguments and evidence for his contention that the new Grenadian regime posed a threat to its neighbors. Several key questions remain unanswered by Reagan's assertion that Grenada was a "Soviet-Cuban colony being readied as a major military bastion to export terror and undermine democracy" ("Transcript").

Reagan needed to explain what need Cuba has for a base in the Caribbean, since Cuba is in the Caribbean. Reagan offered no explanation of how the new government constituted a threat or any evidence of the threat. Even in House hearings held well after the invasion, Secretary Dam had a difficult time explaining these matters in this exchange with Representative Solarz of the Committee on Foreign Affairs:

> **Mr. Solarz.** In what way could Cuba have promoted or fomented subversion in any of the countries of the eastern Caribbean that they

could not have done even without using Grenada? In other words, if they were going to slip arms into the countries or going to train cadres from those countries, could they not train them in Cuba or find other means of slipping the arms into those nations?

Mr. Dam. Well, perhaps. But it is all the more convenient to be just a few miles away. And also, we have seen a pattern of "deniability": Shipping things through Cuba to hide the Soviet hand and shipping through Grenada to hide the Cuban hand, et cetera, et cetera. There are many advantages to the Cubans in having as many bases of operation as possible.

Mr. Solarz. In other words, you are saying that it would make it easier for the Cubans, but they could have done it in other ways.

Mr. Dam. Whether they could have done it successfully or not is the question. They could have tried, and I think to a certain extent they are trying (U.S. House, Military Actions 21).

What are the "many advantages?" Did the U.S. invade just to create a public relations problem and inconvenience for Cuba? The President at least should have offered some evidence of the feared subversion in the area.

As we have seen, Reagan continually denied or ignored or was not aware of pertinent information that could have directly affected the invasion. He repeatedly cited the Cuban presence as motive for his action, yet offered no evidence to show Cuba as a threat. One cannot accept as true an assertion that has no supporting evidence--yet that is exactly what Reagan would have us do. He continually violated ethical norms in presenting wholly inadequate evidence.

Lacking evidence before the fact, Reagan tried to rely upon evidence of Cuban militarization found after the fact. We now know that President Reagan exaggerated when he spoke of the warehouses on Grenada that "contained weapons and ammunition stacked almost to the ceiling" and when he referred to the Cuban

workers at the airport as a "military force" that was "much larger" than the "several hundred" the U.S. expected ("Transcript").

The day after Reagan's national address on the invasion, an admiral announced that there were "at least 1,100" Cubans on the island, all "well-trained professional soldiers." Just a few days later, the State Department accepted Cuba's announced figure of 748 as accurate, and a few days later the military announced that "most of the Cuban prisoners had been classified after interrogation as workers, with only about 100 'combatants.'" These "up and down fluctuations" in Pentagon estimates of Cubans present on Grenada "have not been explained" (Taylor, "In Wake"; Halloran).

Finan and Macauley have developed principles to govern statements made by public officials so that citizens' rights to disagree are not violated. One of the major concerns they express is that statements should be justified by reliable data. The continual fluctuation in numbers concerning the presence of Cuban military personnel violates this ethical standard. Which number was correct? The constant changing of the figures inhibited dissent because statements essential to a judgment changed so often.

Administration reports that "several warehouses full of modern Soviet and Cuban weapons were discovered on Grenada" were also suspect. In fact, they were "no more than half-full, and many weapons were antiquated." Reporters allowed to enter the warehouses found "Korean War-vintage British Bren guns" and some "Marlin 30-30 rifles made in 1870" (Taylor, "In Wake"; Taubman, "Senators").

On the day after Mr. Reagan's national address, Admiral McDonald reported the existence of a "terrorist training base" and accused the Cubans of "planning to put their Government into Grenada." As evidence, the Admiral referred to then-unseen documents purportedly showing that Grenada had signed an agreement for "341 more officers and 4,000 more reservists" to be sent by Cuba to "take over the island." Before these documents could be examined, a "senior Pentagon

official" admitted that the 4,341 military personnel were to be Grenadians, not Cubans (Taylor, "In Wake"). Again, promised evidence did not live up to its billing.

Consistent with our conclusion is that by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "that the Reagan Administration had exaggerated Cuba's role in Grenada." The committee found that the "evidence of Cuban activity in Grenada does not support claims that Cuba was on the verge of occupying the island or turning it into a base for the export of terrorism and revolution" (Taubman, "Senators").

The OECS Did Not Originate The Request For Help

In his address on the invasion, Reagan told the nation that he had been "awakened in the early morning hours" of the previous weekend with an "urgent request" from the "small peaceful nations" of the OECS that "needed our help" in restoring "order and democracy to Grenada" ("Transcript"). Clearly he wanted to portray the invasion as both the idea of the OECS and as a last-minute response to a crisis begun by the ouster of the Bishop government in Grenada. There is, however, some concrete evidence that the U.S. had long planned and desired an invasion of Grenada, and may even have initiated the request from OECS.

The first piece of evidence is that former Secretary of State Haig had long ago suggested "that a U.S. invasion might be the best solution to all of our problems" (U.S. House, Military Actions 3). Second, "an emissary from the State Department traveled to Barbados, prior to the meeting of the OECS ministers, with a memorandum suggesting that a U.S. invasion was a possibility" (U.S. House, Military Actions 3). The Prime Minister of Barbados said that "an American official had approached one of his aides on Oct. 15, and offered American help in launching an operation to rescue Mr. Bishop. Before recanting by saying he had "misspoken," on October 26, the U.S. Ambassador to France said the invasion

was "an action which had begun two weeks ago" (Taylor, "In Wake"). Perhaps the "OECS request was drafted in Washington and conveyed to the Caribbean leaders by special American emissaries" (U.S. House, Military Actions 84).

Third was the fact that "U.S. ships were diverted to the region on October 20, even before the Caribbean leaders met" (U.S. House, Mitary Actions 84). Fourth, if the alleged threat to the Americans was manufactured, as we have previously argued, the case for deception is strengthened.

Fifth, and finally, U.S. naval exercises held in 1981 indicate the possibility of a long-standing U.S. desire to invade. In the late summer of 1981, "U.S. military forces conducted exercises calling for the invasion of 'Amber and the Amberines,' a leftist country in the Caribbean that had seized American residents. The scenario unsettled the people of Grenada and the Grenadines" (U.S. House, United States Policy 92).

These bits of evidence do not, of course, prove that the U.S. initiated the OECS request. They do, however, oblige the Administration to provide a direct response--one that has not been provided.

Although, as Kristol has noted, the threat to the region was expressed to the American people "only in an undertone," we are not surprised that the threat was portrayed as of communist origin. We have already discussed the direct threat to the region, but we have not yet dealt with Reagan's portrayal of the threat posed by the Point Salines airport under construction on Grenada.

Grenada Was No Threat to the United States

The Reagan Administration has a long record of offering poor evidence and arguments regarding the threat posed to the U.S. by the airport. Grenada's airport seemed the most likely referent when Reagan spoke vaguely of "far away places" that can threaten "our national security." At least his description

matched his ominous description of that facility given long before the invasion ("Transcript").

The Administration had been asserting for some time that the airport was "being built by the Cubans for military rather than economic development purposes," when, in fact, an American company was the prinicpal contractor for the project and "most of the money [came] from non-Cuban sources" (U.S. House, United States Policy 7, 16, 50).

The Administration's claim that there was no "economic justification" for the construction of the airport was used to bolster the conclusion that it was a military project that threatened the U.S. Reagan has never satisfactorily responded to Shelton's argument that the airport was being built by Grenada "to facilitate expansion of tourism," which is a "pillar of Grenada's economy." As Shelton noted, "every small island in the eastern Caribbean would give its eyeteeth to have Grenada's new international airport" (U.S. House, United States Policy 38, 44-45, 58).

Grenada's tourism industry has long suffered from the absence of a large airport. Without one, tourists from America have been forced to land in Barbados or Trinidad to take a small plane or boat to Grenada. Dellums saw the airport as having "the greatest development potential for Grenada" and noted that the European Economic Community, the World Bank, and "others of the international community" viewed the airport as "a priority undertaking for the survival of the country." The Reagan suggestion that the airport was larger than necessary for commercial purposes was answered by noting that the airport would be "the same length as the airport on the neighboring islands of St. Vincent and on the island of Trinidad [and] smaller than that on Barbados" (U.S. House, United States Policy 20, 49, 83).

Regardless of the potential economic benefits of the airport, a case could be made that the airport was also a military threat. Following his own personal

investigation, Representative Dellums thought it "absurd" and "totally unwarranted . . . to charge that this airport poses a military threat to the United States national security." Dellums visited the Atlantic Fleet and left "with the absolute impression that nothing being done in Grenada constitutes a threat to the United States or her allies." The Fleet Commander "had no concern" over the airport, which he called a military non sequitor [sic]." Dellums, "fully briefed by high level officials" of the Air Defense Command, was "assured that the airport . . . is of no consequence" to the U.S., and that it had "not now or ever presented a threat to the security of the U.S. (U.S. House, United States Policy 17-18, 20, 83).

There are two troubling inconsistencies in Reagan's portrayal of the threat posed by the airport. The first is in the nature of the threat. In 1982, the State Department and the Pentagon were arguing that the airport would be used by the Cubans as a staging area for their troops in South America and Africa (U.S. House, United States Policy 16, 29). However, when Cuban military supplies were found in Grenada, they were used as evidence than an occupation was planned.

The second inconsistency was over whether or not a strategic threat to the U.S. existed that could have justified the invasion. In 1982, Reagan appointees were expressing concern that the airport could be used as a servicing stop for Soviet bombers and as a base for the spread of communist (anti-American) influence in the region (U.S. House, United States Policy 16, 29). Yet, Reagan spoke of the communist threat in an undertone in 1983. In fact, Reagan's State Department told the Foreign Affairs Committee that the invasion had nothing "whatsoever to do with any strategic or geopolitical considerations" (U.S. House, Military Actions 22). Any hints of a threat to the United States could only have been designed to mislead the audience, since the President's official policy was that such a threat was not relevant to the invasion.

THE BIG LIE?

Perhaps the worst lie told by the Reagan Administration involved the attempt to deceive the American people and the world that the invasion had not been planned by the Administration for quite some time when, in fact, it had been. The evidence for this being a deception is, admittedly, inconclusive.

We have already seen that Secretary Haig had long said a U.S. invasion would solve the problems created by the Bishop regime on Grenada. We have seen that the Administration was hostile to Grenada for quite some time. We have seen that the Administration conducted provocative military exercises near Grenada. We have seen that the Administration may have been the source of of the OECS request for U.S. assistance. And, we have seen that the Administration worked to create evidence that would provide a plausible pretext for an invasion. At the same time, the Administration "understated the amount of planning that the Administration had done before a formal request" from the OECS provided "one of the main stated legal justifications for [the invasion]" (Taylor, "In Wake").

Is it possible that the creation, suppression, and misrepresentation of evidence were done solely to provide a pretext to implement invasion plans made months or years before the RMC ousted Bishop? If so, the biggest lie of all was Reagan's denial of any such plan and elaborate attempt to portray the invasion as an unplanned response to an emergency.

Reagan's denial of a plan to invade was voiced in testimony before a House subcommittee in 1982. Grenada was taken to task because it had "charged on numerous occasions and without a shred of evidence that the United States is preparing an invasion of Grenada" (Bosworth 77). We can give little credence to Reagan's report that his military planners had to work "around the clock to come

up with a plan" for the invasion after the OECS request ("Transcript"). The planning for the invasion apparently began long before the request was made.

SUMMARY

The need for ethical assessment of rhetorical communication arises when the communication, to some degree, "involves possible significant influence on other humans, and to the degree that the communicator consciously chooses specific ends sought and communicative means to achieve those ends" (Johannesen, Ethics). Because the Reagan Administration attempted to influence the American public and did so through conscious rhetorical means, ethical assessment is crucial to this incident.

We have seen clearly that the four criteria for democratic ethical standards have been violated. The first criterion requires that all relevant evidence be disclosed. We have shown that "significant facts" were withheld from the American public ("In Wake"). The second criterion of democratic standards of ethics requires that all arguments be clearly presented and understood. We have concluded with Taylor that the Administration "disseminated inaccurate information" as well as "many unproven assertions" ("In Wake"). Democratic ethics also require the individual be allowed to make a rational, well informed choice. Clearly, since the American public was deliberately deceived, its ability to make a significant choice was impeded. And finally, the democratic standards require that appropriate emotion be used. Here, again, the Reagan Administration failed by consistently appealing to fear for the safety of the Americans and the threat of communism as justifications for the invasion, when neither was justified. With the Iranian hostage crisis still fresh in American minds and world crises having prompted a national state of anti-communist fervor, a more calculated appeal to unchecked emotion would be difficult to imagine.

We have provided evidence for our inferences about the intentions and motives of the Administration. We agree with Taylor that some factual errors can be attributed to "the confusion of a combat situation" while others "involved selective and incomplete reporting" or "deliberate distortions and knowingly false statements of fact" that were intentionally "designed to put Administration actions in a favorable light" ("In Wake"). We have not taken the government to task for the former, and many reported errors were omitted from this analysis for that reason.

The very nature of democracy depends upon the principle of representation. We elect representatives to make choices and decisions for the good of the American public. Regardless of the inherent validity of the decisions made, the American public has the right to know what actions were taken and why. Only then will the public be able to make judgments about actions taken and decide who its representatives will be. If the American public cannot trust its government, then all that democracy stands for has been violated. If democratic standards are to be upheld, the leaders must set the example. If the Administration withholds or distorts information, then it is responsible for manipulating the audience, thereby violating the standards and values for which democracy stands. Wise expressed the threat to democracy as follows:

> The American system is based not only upon formal checks and balances among the three branches of government; it depends also, perhaps most importantly on a delicate balance of confidence between the people and the goverment . . . If the governed are misled, if they are not told the truth, or if through official secrecy and deception they lack information on which to base intelligent decisions, the system may go on--but not as a democracy."

We believe that a number of important and fundamental ethical issues are involved in Reagan's exclusion of journalists from Grenada during the invasion

and severe restrictions on their fact-gathering abilities for quite some time after the invasion (Lewis; Burnham; Weinraub). We believe these issues deserve a separate comprehensive treatment, perhaps as part of an analysis of all of the "information-control actions" used by the Reagan Administration "against the right of the public to obtain information" (Burnham).

The perennially dismal level of trust Americans have in their political leaders may be justified, particularly if this incident is typical of their communicative behavior. Unanswered by this study are questions of how typical this incident is of this Administration, of American presidents, of foreign policy rhetoric, or of any other general phenomena of which this incident is an example. A few related studies do shed some light on these questions.[1] Also unanswered are question of what this episode says about the U.S. public, U.S. journalists, and other branches of the U.S. government and their respective role performance in our democracy.

As we have examined in the previous pages, the standards and values of a democracy were violated in the post-invasion rhetoric. Arguments and evidence that were distorted and withheld inhibited the American public's ability to fairly appraise the incident. Thus, judgments made about the incident are invalid. The Adminstration must recognize its responsibility to the American public, because it is only when it is recognized that democracy will be able to optimally function.

Endnotes

[1] Hahn has found ethical violations in President Ford's handling of the military "rescue" of the Mayaguez. Johannesen has found Reagan to be "ethically irresponsible" in his being "fast and loose with the facts" ("An Ethical"). Green and MacColl have catalogued hundreds of Reagan's misstatements and misinterpretations of the facts on a variety of issues.

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